

**Proceedings from the Seabird Protection Network Messaging Workshop**  
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❖ **Messaging Variability– Targeting your Messages to Specific Audiences**

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- Effective messaging – message in a way that the public is going to buy into.
- Interested and engaged – you have someone available for 20 seconds.
  
- It is not hopeless, but we have to do this in the mist of the “information age”, which is staggering. It’s astounding. You cannot take it all in! We filter things in order to process it. If engaged, you will retain 10% of 100%. You can’t change the reality. You have to accept it. Think about the person in the public who doesn’t have to listen. BUT it doesn’t mean that you cannot be effective.
- 12 tons of wood disappeared in peoples pocket from the Petrified Forest. Did research and found that only 2% stole wood. Solution – volunteers, pledge, etc. The pledge worked. Why? Consistency and Commitment Theory - make them sign the pledge is what worked. People feel the commitment.

❖ Four Basic Ideas on How to Message:

1. Subject, Audience, Purpose (SAP)

- a. Subject: It will not be consistent, what works in one place, will not work in another place. Know your subject. What are the issues? You can’t control a behavior you can’t see. You need to tell them specifically what is inappropriate.
- b. Audience: Level of experience on site. Example – two beaches – one for locals and the other for non-locals. They made the same sign, but people who used the beach consistently and were the experienced user did not easily change their mind
  - Behavior-based messages are NOT effective. You have to message on “why” the people are having the behavior that they have. What promotes the behavior?
  - Need to ask kayakers why you’re going up to the rock? Usually what you will hear is they know what they are doing is not good, but they feel that what their doing is better for them.
- c. Purpose: – What do you want to obtain? What do you want to measure?  
Example: Can you increase how many people read the sign, how much do they remember? Step one: Can you put out the message? Step two: Can you assess it to see if it effective?

2. CREATES

- a. Connect: Link with something tangible, something they can see, or do.
- b. Relevant: People are not biologists. Need to make the subject relevant to the audience – the concept of the Fraction of Selection (how much effort do I put in for what I get out). It has to matter to the target audience.
- c. Enjoyable: Non-captive audiences need to be engaged. If it is too graphic “I don’t have the stomach for that message.”

- d. Appropriate: Message to a 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade education level. Theory of planned behavior – have to get to them.
  - e. Thematic: You decide the one thing you want them to think, feel, believe. If you put too much on a sign, the Fraction of Selection kicks in.
  - f. Engaging: Color, texture and animation draw people in. It depends on the medium.
  - g. Structure: You have to assume people are zoning out at some point. Repetition and transitions to cue people to listen are beneficial. It's not education, one message – one time will make them think and want to learn more. You have “one shot” exposure so you have to make an impact.
3. The Process – *This is an iterative process and needs to be represented this way.*
- As the sender (the communicator) you play a significant part in the end result of the message – it starts with you.
  - Message needs to be translated, so the receiver can absorb the information.
  - You **HAVE** to tailor your message to the audience. Begin with focus groups to have your product vetted. Why do you do what you do?
  - Filters (the Maslow structure rules – hungry, tired, agency filters).
  - Feedback (you have to know what you are trying to achieve). Make sure you build in a measurable, accessible goal. The feedback should match your message.
4. Effective Messaging
- a. Specific: It has to target an audience. (Ex. Dog walkers - Please don't let your dogs off the leash).
  - b. Consequences for Behavior: Be specific of what the consequences will be.  
Responsibilities for Consequences: You have to instill personal responsibility of an individual's actions
  - c. Appeal to norms: Social (injunctive), personal and descriptive. Indian crying on a trashed river – did not work because the social norm is not as powerful as the descriptive norm. What are people doing why they are doing it, and what are the norms?
  - d. Repetition: Say it again and again! Graphic, theme and text all “say” the same information.
  - e. Proximity: The closer you are to the ability to perform the action, the more likely you are to changing the behavior.
  - f. Consistency/Commitment: Locals need oral interaction.
  - g. Tell people why: They want to know.
  - h. Mindfulness vs. mindlessness (Moscardo): You want to be concise with your message and make sure it is different enough for them to stop and think. Move them to mindful acting. Fear is a way, startling them.
  - i. Positive Spin: Something the audience wants to process, fear can be too much and turn people off.
  - j. Shotgun approach: Each of us make a different behavior decision each day. So the approach is to take all of the above 10 approaches.

- Fear can be overused; this is what is wrong with education today. The average child spends 4.6 hours per day with the media. *Recommended book:* Last Child in the Woods – Richard Lowe
- You will rationalize any behavior that you want, so what are the other options? For example – Where can people take their dogs off leash? What is the threat if they don't comply, can it be enforced?
- Establish common ground, go to the decision-maker (leaders) of the group, have to sit down and find out what and why they're doing what they're doing. Don't try to change their behavior at that time. You have to build the relationship. **Listen**. Don't try to manipulate and change people right away.

❖ **Effective Messaging- Finding the Message that works for you and knowing it**

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Assessment

- 1) Objective Drive Assessment
  - A) Cognitive, knowledge, precursor to behavior, “head”
  - B) Behavioral, “hands:”
  - C) Affective, emotional messaging, “heart”
- 2) Feedback / Modification: you may hear answers that you did not expect, and you may have to change the way that you view an issue
- 3) Resources

You can gather data if you have effective messaging through observation, and also self-reporting data from the audience. The truth lies somewhere in the middle of what you observe, what people answer about their behavior, and asking them further questions about their behavior?